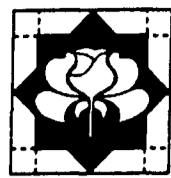


Agriculture Insights



The Lancaster Chamber
of Commerce & Industry
Phone: (717) 397-3531

Guest Columnist:
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Communications Assistant,
The Lancaster Chamber of
Commerce & Industry

Lancaster County, Pennsylvania is home to almost 5,000 farms, with an average farm encompassing about 85 acres of land. In fact, the County ranks fourth in the nation in terms of number of farms. So, it shouldn't be surprising that The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry is one of the only U.S. Chambers to have a full-time Agriculture Service Coordinator on its staff. But, it is surprising how this unique position began and the extraordinary ways it benefits both the Chamber and the community.

The position evolved when The Lancaster Chamber's Agriculture Committee recognized a need to educate the non-farm public on agricultural issues such as the economic benefits of agriculture and the effects of agriculture on the quality of life. However, although the idea was there, funding was a little harder to create. The

committee, a group of agri-business leaders and production farmers—all Lancaster Chamber members, first funded the position with money donated by organizations and individuals. Today, the position is funded by The Lancaster Chamber and a grant from the Lancaster County commissioners.

In a county where total agriculture receipts are over \$7 million, The Lancaster Chamber truly believes that its Ag Coordinator is a strong asset, and it recommends that individuals in agri-business and production farming across the U.S. become involved in their local chambers of commerce.

The position enables the Chamber to be a strong advocate for agriculture across the county," said Jodie Rutt, The Lancaster Chamber's director of finance and operations.

The Lancaster Chamber stays in the forefront of agriculture by sponsoring events such as the annual Agriculture-Industry Banquet, which honors farmers and agri-business with two awards, the annual Farm Financial Management School, which assists farm managers in

You Can Make A Difference!

making sound financial decisions through interactive education; and Family Dairy Days, which invites the community to learn about farming. Strong support for the events is evident by the community's involvement and the ag industry's support. In 1998, over 500 ag leaders attended the Agriculture-Industry Banquet and over 6,000 children and parents participated in Family Dairy Days.

The Chamber also encourages its ag members to become involved in Chamber sponsored groups such as the Small Business Group, which is designed for members with one to 99 employees. Since production farmers often are classified as small businesses, local Chambers' value-added plans also can be a great assistance to them.

For instance, The Lancaster Chamber offers an electricity program through a partnership with Pennsylvania Power & Light's EnergyPlus, which features great service, a competitive price, and a rebate on electricity purchases. To farmers, who use a lot of electricity, this can be a valuable advantage to a Chamber membership. Another benefit of membership is the Chamber's HealthCare Plan, which along with PO's, HMO's and PPO's also offers group dental insurance, group vision insurance, group life insurance, and group disability income. The best part about the HealthCare Plan is that it is available to small businesses that, otherwise, may not be eligible for healthcare.

Besides the value-added

benefits of Chamber involvement, through the active participation of the Chamber's Ag Coordinator, farmers and agri-business organizations know the Chamber recognizes the importance of agriculture in Lancaster County's community and economic structure.

For more information on how to become involved in The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry, contact Sandy Brill, membership manager, at (717) 397-3531. Or contact your local chamber of commerce to see how it can benefit you.

Industrial Hemp Growers To Meet April 16

NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — A presentation to interest growers in industrial hemp production is set Friday, April 16, at Yoder's Restaurant in New Holland, from 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

Farmers throughout the state are invited. Shawn Patrick House from the Lancaster Hemp Company will start the meeting.

Robert Rex, the North American fiber representative for Crane and Company, will answer questions about hemp farming practices and organization.

Jane Balmer, regional representative for the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, will be on hand to answer additional organizational questions.

The presentation is free and open to the public. Seating is limited. Call (717) 399-8369 if you want to attend.

According to a news release submitted by House Monday, in June 1994 President Clinton signed Executive Order 12919 promoting "strategic commodities," and hemp was included.

Approximately 30 countries produce hemp for domestic or export use. Canadian farmers are producing commercially and exporting to the U.S. Twelve states are introducing 1999 legislation to utilize the crop.

For more information, call House at (717) 399-8369, Rex at (215) 487-3317, or Jane Balmer, (717) 653-5916.

Session To Offer Ways To Save Money Producing Beef Cattle

YORK (York Co.) — Area beef producers are encouraged to attend a beef meeting Tuesday, April 20, at the Hoss's Steak and Sea House in West York.

State Extension Specialist Dr. John Comerford will present "10 Simple Ways to Save Money Producing Beef Cattle" at the in-

formational session. The meeting will begin with dinner on your own from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. followed by the program from 7:30 p.m.-9 p.m. Contact Lisa at the York Extension Office, (717) 840-7408, if you plan to attend, so that adequate seating arrangements may be planned in advance.

Beef producers are very familiar with the need to control costs in the beef enterprise. Profit margins are always tight and producers need to look at practical ways to save money without sacrificing production.

For greatest impact, cost control measures must be simple to implement practical ideas. This session will help you identify ways you can improve beef profitability through more effective cost control.

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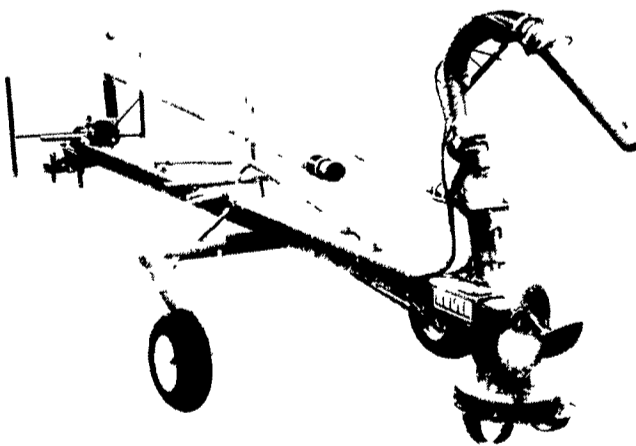
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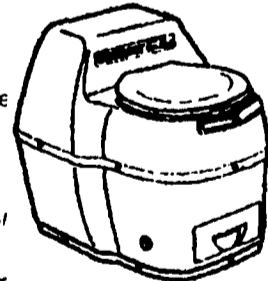
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